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SUBJECT: BELGIUM'S KING ALBERT SWEARS IN VERHOFSTADT III
GOVERNMENT

REF: BRUSSELS 3523

[¶1.](#) (U) King Albert II of Belgium swore in PM Guy Verhofstadt's third cabinet during the morning of December 21, 2007. Verhofstadt followed up this action with a speech outlining the ten-point plan that the interim government intended to carry out before leaving office on Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008. In addition to promising a new budget, pension reform, and measures to shore up declining purchasing power, Verhofstadt made a strong plea for moderation and dialogue across the language divide. We have emailed the full cabinet list to EUR/WE.

[¶2.](#) (U) The Prime Minister indicated that the Verhofstadt III government also would "further" the current military operations in the DRC, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Kosovo. He gave no additional details. He described the anti-terror arrests made earlier on December 21, and promised full engagement in New York at the UNSC. The remaining foreign policy elements of his address were unremarkable -- support for an EU with a liberal economy and a strong social, the Kyoto accords, and the recent agreement in Bali.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) In a discussion on December 20, the Prime Minister told the Ambassador that he was confident about being able to reach an agreement on constitutional reform issues before March 23. He intended to announce the outlines of a plan early in January. Among other steps, he will establish a "Committee of Twelve" that can oversee the reform process.
Bush
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